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Senate Votes to Bar Quizzing Into Privacy of U.S. Employees

[Chicago Tribune Press Service]

Washington, Sept. 13 — The Senate voted, 79 to 4, today to forbid government personnel officials to ask federal employees embarrassing questions about their sex lives and other personal matters.

The vote followed a lively debate over whether to exempt the Central Intelligence Agency from the provisions of the bill. The cloak and dagger agency won a partial victory, along with the National Security Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The three agencies were exempted from a major provision of the bill which would forbid government agencies from requiring federal employees or job applicants to take lie detector or psychological tests designed to obtain information about sexual matters, personal finances, religion, and family matters.

3 Agencies Exempted

But in the case of the CIA, NSA, and FBI, such tests would be permitted only if the agency director or an official designated by him decided the examination was required to protect the national security.

The bill, which was sponsored by Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., [D., N. C.] and 55 other senators, was sent to the House where several similar measures have been referred to the administration committee.

In addition to banning lie detector and psychological tests, the bill would forbid in-

discriminate requirements that employees and job applicants:

1. Disclose their race, religion, or national origin.
2. Attend government-sponsored meetings or participate in outside activities unrelated to their employment.
3. Report on their own outside activities.

No Political Bars

4. Support political candidates or attend political meetings.

5. Buy bonds or make charitable contributions under coercion from their supervisors.

6. Disclose their financial affairs, or those of their immediate families, unless, in specified cases, there was a conflict of interest question.

The bill would establish a board of employees' rights to hear complaints and accord employees the right to civil action in a federal court for violation or threatened violation of the proposed law's provisions.

Sen. John Stennis [D., Miss.], a member of the seven-member Senate CIA watchdog committee, told the Senate the bill as presented to the Senate would hamper the CIA and the NSA in their rigid screening of job applicants. He said he and Sen. Richard B. Russell [D., Ga.], chairman of the Senate armed services committee and of the CIA committee, believed the CIA should be totally exempted.

Called Unworkable

As originally drafted, the bill would permit the CIA and NSA to conduct lie detector and psychological tests only if approved by their respective directors.

Stennis said the partial exemption was inadequate and unworkable in the CIA because the numbers of persons hired was so great the director would have to spend most of his time reviewing individual cases to determine what tests should be made.

"This bill would impair the CIA's capacity to protect our security," Stennis said. "The agency has to employ a lot of people not of the finest character for various jobs, the nature of which I cannot disclose in this public session."

Sen. Henry M. Jackson [D., Wash.], said the use of lie detectors by the CIA was an absolute necessity. Last year, he said, 100 security risks were stopped short of CIA employment because of lie detector tests.

Stennis said it was vital to spot such cases before employment rather than later because the "dirty work already would be done" if a security risk was on the payroll before he could be detected and discharged.

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